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by

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Book Review

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

I. The Moscow Conference

The Moscow Conference—Intensify Campaign for Second Front—"Delay Means Death"—Anti-Second Front Campaign—Triple Offensive of Fascism.

WHATEVER the further details which may still be published of the discussions and outcome of the Moscow Conference, it is evident that this Conference, both by its timing and by the personnel of its participants, represents a crucial landmark of the war. The decisions of the Moscow Conference register a further strengthening of the alliance of the United Nations for victory over Hitler. The renewed affirmation, at this most critical and dangerous moment of the war, of the common aim "to carry on with all their power and energy until the complete destruction of Hitlerism and any similar tyranny" is a blow to all Fifth Column propaganda of doubt, defeatism and disruption. This is the outstanding positive outcome of the Moscow Conference, which is stressed in the official summary of the results. This achievement will be universally welcomed. The outcome of the strategic discussions will be tested in the field of action. It is evident that the establishment of the Second Front in Europe, as already laid down in the decisions of the London Conference announced in June, is now more urgent than ever in the present critical phase of the war. The Moscow Conference must be followed by strengthened national unity, mobilisation and determination in order to fulfil all the practical obligations which the present hour imposes upon us, and above all, in order to ensure the speediest fulfilment of that obligation, already undertaken by the Government since May, which is the crucial condition of united victory—the establishment of the Second Front in Europe in 1942.

THE campaign to rouse and mobilise the entire nation, and to press forward the Government, for the speediest establishment of the Second Front, and to defeat all enemies, obstacles, obstruction and sabotage, needs now to be intensified. This is the main political task which follows the Moscow Conference. The campaign must be intensified, because the enemies of the Second Front continue active, also after the Moscow Conference. Interested comment from quarters hostile to the Second Front seeks now to argue that, because strategical questions have been discussed at the Moscow Conference and certain decisions reached (what decisions the commentators do not know, and some even surmise that the decisions cover other issues, not the Second Front, which was already decided at the London Conference), therefore there is no longer any need for the campaign to mobilise public opinion for the Second Front, and the campaign must stop. The wish is

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father to the thought. On the contrary. Public opinion in this country will be lulled at its peril. The need is greater than ever. The need of the Second Front is the vital need of the British people, in order to win the speediest victory and prevent the most deadly menace. The concern to hasten its establishment is and must be the concern of the British people. Soviet official opinion on this question has been long ago expressed, ever since July, 1941. But the Soviet Union cannot compel the action of the British Government. Only the pressure of the British people can hasten this. Only the most active popular agitation and pressure of public opinion in this country can defeat the highly placed and influential elements who are working to retard and sabotage the fulfilment of the Second Front Agreement. Therefore the campaign must be intensified.

THE Moscow Conference took place at the most critical and dangerous moment of the war. The issues of the war, the future of humanity, are swinging in the balance. The military situation is grave. On every side the question is asked: When will the Second Front be established? Will the Second Front be established this year? It is serious that this question, which has already been settled in principle by the experts and by the Governments, should still need thus to be placed. But the fact must be faced that the Second Front has been already too long delayed. The fact must be faced that the weeks and the months are passing; that Hitler is approaching his immediate objectives in the East, with a view to then striking West; and that the West, despite increasing activity in respect of air raids and the recent important Dieppe Combined Operations Raid, which has provided invaluable experience for the Second Front, has not yet brought its main forces into action against Hitler at the moment when that action is most important and decisive for the whole future prospect of the war. The old formula used by Lenin twenty-five years ago applies to-day on a still broader canvas for Britain and the United States:

"DELAY MEANS DEATH."

WE cannot prejudge the outcome of the decisions of the Moscow Conference. But we can and must fight the enemies of the Second Front here in Britain. We can and must fight the reactionary wreckers and defeatists, the pastmasters of obstruction and delay, the professional advocates of passivity, the opponents of the exertion of the united strength of the peoples, the reactionary anti-democratic friends and dupes of Fascism, who from the Atlantic to India are playing into the hands of Fascist victory. We can and must strengthen the hands of all those in the Government who stand for victory over Fascism, who stand for fighting Fascism in place of sitting down and waiting for inevitable defeat in the name of sober, cautious realism. We can and must compel the Government to win and rally for action all the peoples of the world against Fascism, from the western coasts of Europe to the plains and hills of India, in place of turning potential allies into enemies and pursuing a policy which tips the balance in favour of Fascism.

IN the recent period a triple offensive has been let loose against the world front of the peoples for freedom. The centre of the offensive is the direct military offensive, the supreme thrust of the Axis for speedy victory, concentrated in Hitler's onslaught in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, backed by Japan's assault from the Far East and threat to Siberia and India. But alongside this direct military offensive are two auxiliary wings of the offensive utilising distinctive but no less familiar weapons of the Fascist armoury. In the West there has been the political-diplomatic-propagan-

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dist offensive against the Second Front, directly led by Goebbels, but echoed and carried forward by all the old reactionary cohort of upper class propagandists, politicians, diplomats and strategists who have always, consciously or unconsciously, played to the tune of Fascism from Munich to the present day, and whose onslaught is now directed to paralyse the action of Britain and the United States at the critical hour when the fate of the world is being decided. And in India there is the disruptionist offensive, holding out the menace of internal crisis and civil war, directly fomented and precipitated by reactionary policies of old die-hard imperialist interests here which refuse the Indian claim to self-governing participation in the alliance of the United Nations, and playing on and assisted by reactionary or short-sighted tendencies within Indian nationalism and among sections of the Indian people. This is the three-pronged offensive we have now to defeat by the unity and united action of the peoples in the common liberation struggle.

II. India—What must be done

Indian Crisis—India and the Second Front—A Victory for the Axis—A Needless Conflict—India is Anti-Fascist—National Congress Demand—India as a Free Ally—Bankruptcy of Statesmanship—Door Open for Settlement—Chinese and Australian Support—The Root of the Evil—Cripps Mission Fiasco—Political Deterioration—Fatal Non-Co-operation Policy—Indian Communist Policy—Congress for Negotiations—Provocative Arrests—What Must Be Done—A Coalition National Government—National Unity—World Opinion and India—British Labour Policy—Pressure for Negotiations—Our Duty to India and Britain

IT is from the standpoint of this urgent world situation that we need to judge the present grave crisis in India. *At the moment of the supreme Axis attack throughout the world, when the fortunes of the United Nations are swaying in the balance, a nation of four hundred millions, one-fifth of humanity, has been treated as an enemy for the crime of demanding to be an ally. This is the fantastic but unfortunately true epitome of the Indian situation.* When all the charges and criticisms in the world have been laid against the Congress leadership and tactics, the fact remains that the Congress was asking for the recognition of a free India as an ally of the United Nations; and this demand, because it was accompanied with the threat of civil disobedience in the event of refusal, has been met with police cells, lathi charges, whipping ordinances and firing squads. To have reached such a position represents a bankruptcy of statesmanship on the part of the ruling Power which parallels the worst military fiascos of the war. We cannot be satisfied with such a position. The situation in India is serious, but not irreparable. But we need to act quickly if we are to remedy it in time.

THE war is indivisible, and the front in India cannot be separated from the front in Europe—or the absence of the front in Europe. While no Second Front has yet been established in Europe, a new type of front has been established by our rulers—not in Europe, but in India. Not against Fascism, but against the enemies of Fascism. The arms that have not been used against the Fascist enemy have been used against unarmed popular crowds in India who were demanding the right of their nation to be recognised as an equal ally of the United Nations for the war against Fascism. The

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same authorities who have been so lax and lenient with pro-Fascist agitators in Britain have been swift to incarcerate anti-Fascist agitators in India. With one hand they are releasing daily more Fascists and Mosleyites from the prisons in Britain; with the other they are throwing anti-Fascists, tried and sincere leaders of the international anti-Fascist fight like Nehru, into prison in India. This is an intolerable situation, too closely recalling the policies of a Daladier, which led to evil consequences in France.

ONCE again reactionary policy plays straight into the hand of Fascism. The two halves of reactionary policy, in respect of Europe and in respect of India, fit one another like the two hands of a pair of gloves. It is precisely the reactionary opponents of the Second Front and their press organs who are the most vocal to applaud and gloat over the "strong hand" in India; and they will no doubt be delighted to use the argument of the conflict in India as a further demonstration of the impossibility of the Second Front in Europe. It cannot fail to be observed that the very sudden precipitation of the conflict in India (taking completely by surprise the Congress, which had no plans ready and was preparing to negotiate) coincided with the Moscow Conference, in a way which might be expected to have an unfavourable bearing on these crucial negotiations. With the later months of the year the threat of Japan will reach its sharpest point. In this critical situation, with the resources of the United Nations strained in every sphere, with the need of every ally, to thrust away the offer of co-operation of the great popular national forces of India and turn them to hostility, is not strategy, but madness. Or, rather, if it is strategy, it is the strategy of the war of reaction against the popular movement, and not of the war of the peoples against Fascism.

THE opening of crisis and conflict in India is equivalent to a major military defeat for the United Nations and a victory for the Axis. With Fascism at the gates of India, threatening directly to conquer India and to utilise India for its aims of world domination, we are faced with a situation in which there is internal crisis and conflict in India, division between rulers and ruled, arrests of the principal and best known popular leaders, sporadic disorder and police firing—a conflict that must be watched with grim satisfaction by the Japanese generals on the frontiers or the Axis propagandists in Berlin. It is to-day universally admitted by all observers that the loss of Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, Java, Borneo and the speedy advance of the Japanese in these regions was above all due to the lack of co-operation between the Governments and the peoples. Must this experience be repeated on a yet vaster canvas in India, with deadly consequences for the whole world fight against Fascism? This is what we must strain every nerve to prevent. We cannot afford to thrust aside four hundred million potential allies and turn them into enemies. We cannot afford to provoke a needless conflict in India for the benefit of Fascism.

FOR *this conflict in India is needless, unjustifiable, indefensible. It is a conflict between opponents of Fascism, between two nations who are equally opposed to Fascism. This is the heart of the problem of the present Indian situation.* The *Manchester Guardian* justly commented in its leader on the morrow of the arrests on August 10:—

> If both sides have the same sincere intentions with regard to India's freedom and to her due place as an active combatant against the aggressor, it is ridiculous that we should be facing a conflict in which the common aims of India and the Allies will be more and more forgotten.

Significant also was the comment of *The Times* editorial on August 12:—

> The political situation will not remain static; and present Indian support for Government

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policy is combined with the demand for more active Indian participation in the conduct of affairs. This is a reasonable, constructive and welcome demand. . . . The needs of war, no less than the interests of unity, demand a closing of the ranks among all who are prepared to work actively in partnership for the defence of India, for the cause of the United Nations, and for the full attainment of national self-government, while standing resolute against a policy of disorder and disruption.

But to implement such a policy, political realism will require negotiations with the National Congress, no less than with other political sections and leaders.

THE Indian people are no allies of Fascism. They passionately desire national freedom, and have struggled for it for decades with signal self-sacrifice, heroism and solidarity, in the course of which they have built up through their National Congress a popular movement of millions without parallel in the world —the greatest national movement in the world next to the Chinese, and our natural ally in the fight against Fascism. Precisely because they stand for freedom, they are opposed to Fascism. With the exception of an insignificant minority represented by Bose in Berlin, they no less passionately hate Fascism; their sympathies are with the Soviet people, with the Chinese people, and therefore with the cause of the United Nations. Their leaders have understood and proclaimed, and have consistently taught their followers, with a breadth of international outlook rare in a purely national movement, that the cause of Indian freedom is bound up with world freedom and with world victory over Fascism. For the past ten years they have played their part in the vanguard of the international anti-Fascist front, for China, for Abyssinia, for Spain, at a time when many of those who to-day in the places of power in Britain dare to denounce them for failing to join up in the fight against Fascism were themselves praising and helping Fascism and betraying China, Abyssinia and Spain. India is far more deeply and sincerely anti-Fascist than many National Government Ministers in Britain.

NOR is the demand of the Indian National Congress to-day an impossibilist or extremist demand, striving to take advantage of the dilemmas of British imperialism for a sectional national gain without regard to world issues or consequences. Theirs is no "Sinn Fein" ("Ourselves Alone") policy. They know very well that such exclusive national blindness would be equivalent to national suicide in the present world situation, when the fate of every nation is thrown on to the anvil of the world battle. On the contrary, it is precisely because they wish to play their full part in the world battle against Fascism, with the unleashed strength of a confident and rising nation, that they strain against the outworn bureaucratic shackles of a system which is not only anti-national and anti-democratic, but also singularly antiquated and incompetent (the days of the Mesopotamia Commission are not over, but rather intensified, only there are to-day no Commissions), and under which they feel no possibility of the nation playing a worthy part in the struggle.

THEREFORE they demand a National Government now, not in opposition to the interests of the struggle of the United Nations, but in order to fulfil their part in that struggle by mobilising the full strength of the Indian nation, its man-power and resources, on a scale far exceeding anything at present attempted, and as only a popular Government enjoying the confidence of the nation can do. Therefore they find infuriating the tepid Crippsian discussions and bland patronising "offers" of hypothetical post-war constitutions, when their heart and soul is in the present struggle which they know will determine the fate of India and the world, and when the only demand which matters to-day, the demand for a National

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Government to mobilise India's participation in the present struggle, is steadfastly refused. Not to understand that this profoundly international and anti-Fascist outlook, indissolubly linked with Indian national patriotism, is the burning impulse which drives such leaders as Nehru (however much we may disagree with the desperate expedient of civil disobedience as a weapon to attain these ends) is not to understand the beginning of the Indian problem. The demand of the Indian National Congress to-day is for the recognition of a free India as an ally of the United Nations, to mobilise the armed resistance of their people against Fascist aggression under a popular Government of their own leaders in whom they have confidence, but fully accepting the supreme military leadership and command of the United Nations. What sincere democrat or supporter of victory over Fascism could oppose such a demand?

YET, with all the cards stacked against Fascism in India and on the side of the United Nations, with ninety per cent. of articulate political opinion eager to fight on the side of the United Nations, the policy of the British Government in India has succeeded in performing the brilliant feat of turning the bulk of this popular movement and feeling into bitter hostility or even active resistance. What are we to think of a policy which produces such fruits? The most outstanding military fiascos of the war can hardly compare with such a political fiasco. What are we to think of a policy by which a Nehru, a symbol of international anti-Fascism, finds himself against his will thrust into a position in which he appears lined up in a front of struggle objectively hindering the war effort of the United Nations against Fascism and opposed to the front of the United Nations as represented by the British Government in India. How has this tragic situation come about?

THE significance of the transformation of the war in June, 1941, was well understood by the Indian national movement. The release of the principal Congress leaders opened the possibility of a new orientation and the advance to a basis of co-operation. The Bardoli resolution of the National Congress in December, 1941, declared for the principle of armed resistance to the Axis as an ally of the United Nations, provided India could mobilise under a National Government. Gandhi passed out of the leadership because of his disagreement with this resolution and the abandonment of non-violence. The *Times of India* commented: "The resolution (of Congress) reopens the door to agreement with the British Government, thereby giving a valuable lead which we hope will be reciprocated." The way was open, given only a minimum of statesmanship and favourable response from the side of Britain.

THIS favourable opening was further assisted by the visit in February, 1942, of Marshal Chiang Kai-shek to India, with his simultaneous public appeal to India and to Britain. To India he said:—

> The present international situation divides the world into two camps—of aggression and anti-aggression. All those who oppose aggression and are striving for the freedom of their country and mankind should join the anti-aggression camp. There is no middle course.

To Britain he said:—

> I sincerely hope and I confidently believe that our ally Great Britain, without waiting for any demands on the part of the people of India, will as speedily as possible give them real political power, so that they may be in a position further to develop their material and spiritual strength and thus realise that their participation in the war is not merely an aid to the anti-aggression nations for the securing of victory, but also a turning-point in their struggle for India's freedom. From an objective point of view I am convinced that this would be the wisest policy, which will redound to the credit of the British Empire.

It will be noted that he urged "real political power" for the Indian people to enable them to strengthen their participation in the war, *i.e.*, as a war measure, not

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as a post-war promise. This viewpoint corresponds to that of the Indian national movement, and is the crux of the present controversy.

SIMILARLY, the Australian Minister for External Affairs expressed the same viewpoint in February, 1942, urging self-government for India now during the war in order to strengthen Indian participation in the war:—

> We sympathise with the aspirations of the Indian people to become one of the self-governing nations, *and as such to take part in the defence of the Allied cause in Asia.*
>
> (Dr. H. V. Evatt, Australian Commonwealth Minister for External Affairs, speech in the Australian Parliament, February 27, 1942.)

There is reason to believe that American official channels also made representations to the British Government, urging the application of the Atlantic Charter to India. It is important to recognise this rôle of American - Australian - Chinese pressure in order to understand the context of the Indian national demand and the relative isolation within the United Nations of the British official viewpoint which still refuses to consider a responsible National Government in India during the war. By the spring of 1942 a favourable situation had thus been created. The ball was at Britain's feet. If there was still reluctance and resistance from British official quarters, the arrival of the Japanese at Rangoon in March helped to supply the necessary impetus.

THE Cripps Mission in April unfortunately destroyed this favourable position. It is vital to understand this crucial turning-point in recent political development in India, since the congratulatory haze of self-deception with which official propaganda in this country has endeavoured to cover up the failure has fostered illusions here, both as to the supposed magnanimity of the offer, or the beneficial effects of the contact, which are not helpful. The brutal truth needs to be faced that in relation to Indian opinion the Cripps Mission did immeasurable harm; and all the worsening of the political situation and exacerbation of relations dates from it.

THE Cripps Mission failed, not primarily because of the highly dubious character of the post-war plan which it offered, nor because of the political divisions in India which were only subsequently brought forward as a reason for failure. It failed because, under cover of the dubious post-war plan, it rejected out of hand and ruled out the one issue that mattered—the establishment of a responsible National Government now with effective powers for Indian participation in the war. This rejection, it was made clear, was independent of the agreement or disagreement of the various sections of Indian political opinion. The elaborate hypothetical post-war plan was only the window-dressing to cover the rejection of the one real present issue. This rejection ran counter to the entire range of Indian opinion, including the most moderate opinion. Not only the Congress, but every important Indian organisation turned down the Cripps proposals.

IN these negotiations the Congress went to considerable lengths of concessions in the hope of reaching a positive settlement, offering to serve under a British Viceroy, provided they had real responsibility and powers, and to accept a British Commander-in-Chief, not only for the control of military operations, but as a member of the Cabinet. In vain. They were told that British power must remain absolute and dictatorial, that an Indian Minister of Defence might at the most control canteens and stationery. When they tried to negotiate, in order to narrow the margin of disagreement, they were told, "Take it or leave it." This "take it or leave it" attitude gave the impression that there was no real intention

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to negotiate, but rather to prepare the grounds for a future conflict. This impression was strengthened by the unfortunate speech of Lord Halifax on April 7, while the negotiations were still in progress, already anticipating failure and declaring that the British Government would in that event maintain power alone and that the Cripps Mission would have served its purpose in establishing an unanswerable case against future critics of British power in India.

DETERIORATION in the political situation rapidly followed. The British Government declared that nothing more could be done. The National Congress, frustrated in its desire to co-operate, after a period of hesitancy and divided counsels, slid down the inclined plane towards non-co-operation. Leadership passed back into the hands of Gandhi, the pacifist evil genius of Indian politics. Serious anti-Fascist leaders and advocates of co-operation with the United Nations, like Nehru and Azad, passed into the wake of Gandhi and his dangerous proposals for a non-co-operation campaign. Unscrupulous reactionary propaganda at once seized on the characteristic utterances of Gandhi, advocating pacifism and appeasement, to smear the whole national movement as capitulationist and ready to make peace with Japan, even though the personal viewpoints of Gandhi in respect of non-violence and appeasement had been explicitly repudiated by every official Congress statement and resolution. The bombshell publication of documents seized in a police raid in order to expose facts already well known from Gandhi's public articles illustrated this technique of preparation.

THE Congress resolution on non-co-operation was put out in July and finally adopted on August 7 (against an opposition vote of 13, led by the Indian Communist Party, whose restoration of legal rights was a recognition of their growing influence and strength). This resolution reaffirmed sympathy for the United Nations and the demand for recognition of India as a free ally under a National Government for armed resistance to Fascism in co-operation with the United Nations, but added the threat of civil disobedience in the event of refusal. Reaction above had produced reaction below. To the fatal policy of the British Government was now added the fatal policy of the Congress, both leading to division in the face of the common enemy.

THE anti-Fascist working-class sections of the national movement represented by the Indian Communist Party had from the outset put forward a clear and consistent line in relation to the war of liberation of the united peoples and the path forward of the Indian national movement to liberation through a positive response to the tasks and responsibilities raised by the war. This line will be found set out in the booklet "Forward to Freedom," by P. C. Joshi, Secretary of the Indian Communist Party, published in India in February, 1942, and shortly to be reprinted in this country. They now set out their positive alternative proposals to non-co-operation in the present critical situation: to build up the united national front in India, including the unity of the Congress, the Moslem League and all other political sections on a common platform of resistance to Fascism; on this basis to press the demand for a settlement and for a National Government for India; while pressing the just political demand, to co-operate wholeheartedly in the war effort and the mobilisation of the people; resolute resistance to all policies of non-co-operation as fatal to the interests of the Indian people. But with the existing embitterment of national feeling, and the reactionary refusal by British ruling circles of the demand for a National

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Government, this policy was not yet able to win the support of the bulk of the national movement.

NO fighter for anti-Fascist unity could support a policy of non-co-operation, whatever the provocation, in the war of the United Nations against Fascism, since this means division of the forces opposed to Fascism and could facilitate Fascist victory. But it is essential for sympathetic British opinion to understand how sincere Indian patriots and anti-Fascists, goaded and provoked by the refusal of their reasonable demands, and unable to see the possibility of the positive alternative policy which the Indian Communist Party advocated, fell into the fatal trap of adopting the policy of non-co-operation, believing it to be their only weapon and their only way to the free mobilisation of the people for the establishment of a National Government and effective defence against Fascism—although, in fact, it could only mean division before Fascism, suicidal to the interests of Indian freedom. While we must deplore this failure of leadership, we cannot but recognise that the heaviest responsibility rests with the reactionary policy which refused India's just demands and thus provoked such an outcome.

AT the last the Congress showed every desire to reach a settlement and to negotiate. The resolution was revised to stress the desire for a practical settlement and for co-operation in armed resistance to Fascism. The final speeches of Gandhi and Nehru stressed the desire to negotiate. Nehru stated in his final reply to the debate: "The resolution is not a threat; it is an invitation and an explanation; it is an offer of co-operation." Gandhi's subsequently published letter to Marshal Chiang Kai-shek in July made clear that he "will take no hasty action, and whatever action is taken will be governed by the consideration that it should not injure China or encourage Japanese aggression in India or China: I am straining every nerve to avoid a conflict with British authority." It was explained that the first step would be a letter to the Viceroy proposing negotiations before there would be any question of launching any action. The letter was begun immediately after the close of the Congress Committee, but was apparently never allowed to be finished. Within a few hours the wholesale arrests followed, which in turn provoked civil conflict and some sporadic disorders, disowned by the Congress, and met by active repression with widespread police and military action.

THE arrests precipitated the open conflict and disorders, and in this way fulfilled the rôle of a direct provocation, almost as if to prevent the offered negotiations. It is difficult to see how this deliberate decision for a policy of repression in preference to negotiations can be regarded as justified by the situation. Once the disorders began, it was inevitable that the Government should take action against them. But it was the arrests which provoked the disorders, not the disorders which provoked the arrests. At the moment of the arrests, at the close of the Congress Committee session, there was no such immediate urgency to justify the argument of the supposed imperative necessity to precipitate the conflict. No order for civil disobedience had been given. There were obviously no plans of action ready. The aim of the Congress was manifestly to negotiate. The disorders which were provoked by the arrests were disowned by the Congress and condemned by the Congress press. It is not easy to escape the impression that the precipitation of the conflict in this way was dictated by reactionary interests in ruling circles which were more concerned to utilise a favourable tactical opportunity for crushing the

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Congress and the popular movement in India than in winning Indian co-operation against Japan.

WE need now to do all in our power to remedy this dangerous situation. What must be done is clear. We must press for the immediate reopening of negotiations, equally with the Congress and with all political sections and leaders in India, with a view to the speediest establishment of a provisional popular Government in India, representative of all political sections and leaders willing to co-operate in the common task of armed resistance to Fascist aggression as an ally of the United Nations. This is the plain common-sense response to the present urgent situation, and the indispensable basis on which we must strive to end the crisis and establish that co-operation which is equally essential in the interests of India, of Britain and of all the United Nations.

THE argument that such a coalition National Government is impossible to establish because of the divisions of the different political sections and groupings in India ignores the fact that the attempt has not been made. This negative prediction of failure as a justification for not making the attempt perpetuates the very obstacle it professes to deplore. For present purposes we need not concern ourselves with the representative or unrepresentative character of the various minority and splinter groupings and organisations, without figures of membership or electoral support, which have been inflated and publicised to an artificial importance by the conditions of foreign rule and special encouragement and protection of their anti-national sectionalism ("To emphasise the essential importance of Hindu-Moslem agreement does not imply, as Nationalists assert, that the British are pursuing a policy of divide and rule. The divisions exist, and British rule is certain as long as they do"—*The Times*, January 31, 1941). In the present national crisis the national movement must be prepared to make far-reaching concessions for the sake of national unity; and the Congress leaders have shown understanding of this, just as the most serious and responsible representatives of other sections have shown similar understanding.

BUT so long as a National Government is refused, and British absolute power is maintained, then inevitably the maximum intransigence of every sectional and splinter grouping and organisation is encouraged, because every such organisation looks to the paramount Power to protect its sectional claims, and finds in these, instead of in consideration for the well-being of India, the sole reason for its political existence. So soon as this artificial sustaining prop is removed, normal political considerations hold sway as in other countries, and common danger, common national need and common emergency becomes the cement which binds together national unity. So long as the threat of civil disobedience by the National Congress is met with instant drastic repression by the Government, while the parallel threat of "revolt" made officially by the leader of the Moslem League in February if their claims are not conceded and sustained is met with instant declarations from official quarters that in that case no course must be pursued which would provoke such a menacing revolt and possibility of civil war, it is obvious that this method of rule is perpetuating division. But if once the firm policy of the establishment of a responsible National Government is definitively adopted, with invitation to participate to every political section and leadership willing to co-operate in the common effort, but with no right to any grouping to hold up the scheme by its veto, if it chooses voluntarily to exclude itself, the imagined insurmountable obstacles will

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be possible to overcome, and a Government of representative men of good will from all political sections can be established with the enthusiastic support of the Indian nation. This is the path of statesmanship and of serious mobilisation of India against Fascism.

THERE is reason to believe that such a solution has been strongly urged from official quarters on behalf of the American, Chinese and Australian Governments. We have already noted the explicit declarations of the Australian Minister for External Affairs and of Marshal Chiang Kai-shek. *The Times* Washington correspondent reports:—

> Of the anxiety which the events in India have aroused (in Washington) there can be no question, and the visit to India of General Stilwell, who commands the American forces in China, India and Burma, and of Mr. Lauchlin Currie, the President's special envoy to Chungking, has undoubted significance. . . . Suggestions looking towards a settlement have been advanced here from time to time. *One, which is believed to have approval in Washington, Canberra and Chungking, was the proclamation of a nominal commonwealth with a Provisional Government representing all parties.* (*The Times*, August 11, 1942.)

The Chinese Government newspaper, *Central Daily News*, writes:—

> We receive the news of the arrest of Gandhi, Nehru and Azad with the deepest regret. The arrests, irrespective of right and wrong, would inevitably affect Indians' confidence in the United Nations, and furnish Axis propaganda. Gandhi, Nehru and the others had the support of a majority of Indians, and their arrest would not solve the problem. If the conflict were allowed to continue, it would affect the entire war.

The New York correspondent of the *Sunday Times* reported on August 16:—

> Events in India are getting more publicity than any other events from overseas, and so far the bulk of this publicity has been hostile to the Government of India.

The *Economist's* American correspondent noted on August 15:—

> It would be a mistake to count on unqualified support from American opinion if no further attempts are made to work out a solution.

IMPORTANT sections of democratic opinion in this country are also pressing for such a solution. It is unfortunate that the declaration officially issued on behalf of the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress on August 12 has continued the bad record of official Labour on India, carried forward from the Simon Commission, the Meerut Trial and the MacDonald Government's arrest of scores of thousands. By swinging completely behind the reactionary policy pursued and directing its criticism only against the Congress, this declaration has failed to respond to the urgency of the situation and is only calculated to deepen the gulf between the peoples of the two countries. The demand that Congress must cease civil disobedience before negotiations can be opened overlooks the fact that Congress had not yet launched its civil disobedience campaign when the arrests provoked the conflict, that the disorders have been officially deplored as contrary to the wishes and interests of the Congress by such official Congress newspapers as have still been able to appear, and that the Congress was officially asking for negotiations before launching civil disobedience. In this context such a demand becomes an obstructionist demand to hinder negotiations, when it is only the opening of negotiations that can remove the obstacles to agreement. The present urgent situation is no time for standing on punctilio, but demands the instant and unconditional opening of negotiations with a view to finding the common basis for agreement in the imperative interests of both nations.

BUT it can be confidently stated that this obstructionist outlook is not representative of the general body of labour and democratic opinion. Such press organs as the *Manchester Guardian*, *News-Chronicle*, *Evening Standard*, and also the *Daily Herald* (until the official Labour declaration compelled it to perform a somersault and reverse its policy) have taken a critical line on the arrests and urged immediate negotiations. The Miners' Federation National Conference

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on August 1, representing half a million miners, unanimously adopted a resolution for the reopening of negotiations on the basis of the recognition of India's claim to independence. Trial ballots in big factories have shown a ten to one vote for Indian independence. The campaign of the fifty thousand members of the Communist Party has followed the lines of the National Conference resolution adopted on May 25, 1942, which declared:—

To win the co-operation of the 400 millions of India in the common struggle, we must recognise the independence of India as an equal partner in the alliance of the United Nations, and reopen negotiations with the National Congress for the establishment of a National Government with full powers, subject only to such restrictions as the Indian people are willing to accept in the interests of India and of the common struggle against the Axis Powers.

This demand has won enthusiastic endorsement at crowded mass demonstrations all over the country.

THERE is no doubt that the influence of world opinion, and especially of the other chief partners of the alliance of the United Nations, will make itself felt in relation to the present Indian crisis, which is of urgent concern to all, and assist in reaching such a solution. But the primary political responsibility rests here in Britain, and it is the Labour and democratic movement of this country which must play the foremost part in fulfilling this responsibility. We must exert our endeavours to overcome the present crisis and find a base for the free and honourable co-operation of the great Indian nation in the alliance of the United Nations for the defeat of Fascism and the freedom of all nations, including India. We must exert our pressure on the Government to reverse its present policy and pursue a policy which will make such a settlement possible. We have here a duty to perform, equally in our own interests, in the interests of the Indian people, and in the interests of the common cause of victory over Fascism.

R. P. D.

August 20, 1942.

[*A pamphlet based on the above Notes of the Month has been prepared and is now available for readers.*]

The End of Munich

I am glad to inform the House that I have to-day exchanged notes with the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which I stated that the policy of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in regard to Czechoslovakia was guided by the formal act of recognition of the Czechoslovak Government by His Majesty's Government in July, 1941, and by the Prime Minister's statement on September 30, 1940, that the Munich Agreement had been destroyed by the Germans. I added that, as Germany had deliberately destroyed the arrangements concerning Czechoslovakia reached in 1938, His Majesty's Government regarded themselves as free from any engagements in this respect.

—*Mr. Eden in the House of Commons*, August 5, 1942.

The manufacture of umbrellas, which includes their repair, reconditioning or re-covering, has been prohibited from August 1st, except under licence, under a Board of Trade order.

—*Press*, August 16, 1942.

The Editor of LABOUR MONTHLY will be very glad to receive contributions in the form of finished articles or of suggestions and data for articles. The customary proviso must be made that no responsibility is undertaken for manuscripts sent to him nor can he promise to enter into correspondence regarding contributions not accepted.

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Strategy and the Second Front

by WILLIAM RUST

THE background to the Churchill-Stalin negotiations in mid-August was the sharp deterioration in the military situation of the United Nations. Since our review of the war in the June issue of LABOUR MONTHLY the Nazis have made a deep advance into southern Russia and have driven the Eighth Army out of Libya and across the borders of Egypt. The shipping position has also worsened as a result of the intensified U-boat warfare. Only the Pacific front shows a certain improvement, but even this may be set at naught by the political disintegration in India.

A heavy price is thus being exacted for the failure of the Allies to operate a united strategy and to take advantage of the initiative wrested from the Nazis by the winter and spring successes of the Red Army. The continued postponement of the opening of the Second Front in Europe has enabled the enemy to regain the initiative on a vital sector of the Eastern Front and he is now desperately striving, before the onset of winter, to turn these successes to strategical advantage by blows aimed at crippling the war economy of the Soviet Union and undermining the offensive power of the Red Army as a whole. If these efforts are successful, incalculable harm will be caused to the military position of the Allies on *all* fronts.

It is not enough for governments to possess the prerequisites for victory; they must be turned to account without loss of time. With this fundamental of strategy in mind our June survey, although strongly confident, ended with this warning:—

> Thus the perspective is clear—victory this year. But let there be no underestimation of the enemy, and the magnitude of the tasks before us. The German Army is far from being destroyed; every inch of ground will have to be fought for, and progress will not be even and unbroken. The growth of any tendencies in Britain to sit back and leave it to the Red Army would be fatal to our own interests, would prolong the war and enormously increase the sacrifice.

The desire of the people for the achievement of a united strategy and their understanding of its fundamental importance has been amply demonstrated by the upsurge of the mass movement in both Britain and America. All the attempts to befog this movement with a spate of technicalities and gloomy forebodings have failed of their purpose; the people feel the urgency of the times and they are ready for action and sacrifice. They have not suffered the experience of two world wars in the course of twenty-five years, they have not witnessed the fall of Spain, Czechoslovakia and other nations without learning that victory is dependent upon unity in action.

This fervour of the mass movement is, indeed, one of the most inspiring factors of the present situation. Morale is high. The people believe in victory. They are not dismayed by the successes of the enemy. The problem is to bring into decisive action this unbending will of millions of anti-Fascist fighters.

The Second Front has long ceased to be regarded as a purely military-technical question to be left to the leisurely attention of experts. The people also claim the right to be consulted. They refuse to reconcile the propaganda about the growing strength of the Allies with the constant pleas for delay in the full utilisation of these resources. They are alarmed by the obvious contradiction between the "full understanding" reached by the Governments "with regard to the urgent tasks of creating a Second Front in Europe in 1942" and the way in which the favourable months of 1942 are being allowed to pass without action.

They note with growing concern the emphasis laid on policies alternative to the Second Front, especially the widely propagandised view that Germany can be brought to its knees by the heavy bomber. This is the theme of innumerable newspaper articles in America and is strongly supported in influential R.A.F. circles here. It was hinted at by Mr. Bevin when he claimed at a public meeting that the Second Front "is not the only way to win the war." This babble of tongues does not spread confidence in official policy, but creates the belief that there is lack of certainty in high places which must be ended by decisive action.

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It is also quite impossible to persuade the masses that the attitude of the politicians and generals to the Second Front is entirely uninfluenced by political considerations, as *The Economist* attempted to argue in an article which stated that it is "mischievous nonsense" to suggest that ideological differences are holding up the decisive thrust in the West. Unfortunately for *The Economist*, this assertion of righteousness was speedily followed by Lady Astor's infamous outburst which, coming from the social head of the Cliveden set, must be regarded as something more than an exhibition of class spleen. The fact that prominent politicians (Lady Astor this year and Moore-Brabazon last) dare to utter publicly the sentiments of the late Neville Chamberlain at moments of extreme crisis is sufficient to awaken the class instincts of large numbers of workers, who regard these utterances as expressive of policies that are being fought for behind the scenes.

Without specialised military information it is, of course, impossible to determine when and how such an operation as the Second Front should be undertaken. But in retrospect it is not difficult for the average man to reach a judgment on the course of the war even without that "inside information" which the experts always lay claim to when justifying their passivity or lack of initiative. Thus, when Hitler subsequently admitted that his troops had reached "breaking point" last winter, at the time when such an accomplished military strategist as Stalin was publicly calling for the Second Front, it was not illogical for the man in the street to conclude that there had been a chance then to strike a blow in the West that the British Government had failed to utilise.

The winter was allowed to slip by to the accompaniment of gloomy prophecies as to what would happen to the Red Army in the spring, when Hitler launched his new offensive. But the promised spring offensive did not materialise and the launching of the summer campaign was delayed by the attack in the Kharkov sector which Timoshenko opened on May 17. Consequently, Hitler's all-out offensive, by which he hopes to crumple up Soviet resistance, did not begin until June 29. In the light of these facts it is not surprising that the Trafalgar Square demonstrator, despite his lack of inside information and expert training, should conclude that the second major opportunity to strike at the enemy in the West had been allowed to pass in the spring and that Hitler was consequently given the opportunity to regroup his forces and to complete his preparations for the present attack.

Goebbels's own newspaper, the *Volkischer Beobachter*, states that the people's movement in Britain and the U.S.A. for a Second Front "smacks of an organised mass-hysteria." Our own critics of this movement, being a little more delicate in their choice of derisive terms, prefer to dismiss it as "popular clamour." Both home and foreign critics are correct in recognising the power of the mass movement which is rising to a higher point than ever before precisely because, with the lessons of the lost opportunities in their minds, the masses again see the Nazi forces fully stretched out on the Eastern Front and their defences in the West reduced to the minimum.*

This is our third chance in fifteen months. History may not give us another. If Britain does not act now it may be driven into the opening of the Second Front out of sheer desperation at a later period, but under far more unfavourable circumstances. The essence of the Nazi strategy is to strike such blows at the Red Army as will cripple the offensive power of the Soviet Union, and then, while holding the defensive on the Eastern Front, to turn the full fury of the panzer divisions against Britain and the Middle East at the same time as the Japanese pass over to an extended offensive in the Pacific.

Nothing will be gained by speculation on what degree of success may attend these far-reaching aims. It is impossible to calculate the surprise factor in military operations or to make provision for the influence exercised by the shifts and changes of policy on the course of military operations. It is axiomatic to prepare for the worst and to act with daring in order to frustrate the strategic aims of the enemy. The starting point must be the achievement of a united strategy which will relieve the pressure of the Red Army

* *According to official Soviet estimates there are now only nine divisions of worth-while German troops in France. The other divisions are garrison troops of elder classes.*

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and bring the mighty forces of the United Nations into action in the most decisive places.

The basic cause of the deterioration of the military situation is the fact that the Red Army has had to withstand alone, for a period of fifteen months, the concentrated attacks of Germany and its satellite powers. Remembering that in the last war Germany, with less allies than it now possesses, held six great powers at bay for more than four years, the wonder is not that the Red Army is being again forced back, but that it has been able to withstand the pressure for so long.

Even so, it would be an unpardonable error to be dazzled by the Nazi victories and to conclude that these are the fruits of an unbroken strength. There are numerous fainthearts and defeatists in this country who are ready to throw their hats into the ring as soon as Goebbels announces one of his annihilating victories, complete with a fanfare of trumpets. But it is indeed surprising to find the *Tribune* in this bad company, suggesting that the Red Army must inevitably go down under the sheer weight of German metal and so receptive to Nazi propaganda as to believe that "the Germans have won their recent victories in the South at almost as small a price as in France." (August 7.) Such a melancholy and lop-sided view, although it may have been put forward in an effort to emphasise the dangers confronting Britain and to arouse people to action, can actually have the contrary effect of causing discouragement.

The danger is great; it was never greater. But Hitler's desparation is born of fear. The Fuhrer is gambling against the threatened Second Front, internal disintegration and the oncoming winter.

In a captured Order of the Day issued to the 17th German Army on July 10 it is stated:—

> The Fuhrer demands that the schedule of operations be strictly adhered to, so that the necessary forces may be released in time for subsequent transfer to the West. Although according to the available information there are no grounds for fear, all the operations connected with the reaching of the northern Caucasus must be completed in the shortest possible time.
>
> —(*The Times, August* 11.)

In this attack on a relatively short front the Nazis have, by reason of their superior communications, concentrated an enormous force of troops and tanks which have already forced the Red Army back a considerable distance. The aim of the panzer divisions is the capture of Stalingrad. The mortal danger that this advance threatens has not been concealed by the Soviet Government. In fact, the harsh realities have been made known to civilian and soldier alike in order to spur them on to mighty heroic efforts. The economic losses suffered by the Soviet Union are already extremely severe and if Stalingrad were to fall the Volga communications would be cut, Russia would be deprived of its main oil supplies and the Central and Southern Armies would be separated.

Although the Nazis have secured startling results by this concentrated attack on a vital sector of the front it is well to note that in 1942 they are no longer able to strike on the entire front as in 1941, and that they have not so far succeeded in co-ordinating this blow with an offensive by air-borne troops against Syria and Palestine through Cyprus. Moreover, the attempt to seize Stalingrad is not being carried out with the strict adherence to schedule as demanded by the Fuhrer. The original plan to strike at both Moscow and Stalingrad through Voronezh has been frustrated and although Timoshenko has been compelled to give ground rapidly in the Caucasus, all attempts to approach within striking distance of Stalingrad, either from the North-east or South-east, are meeting with a mighty resistance. The German forces are being bled white and large numbers of their tanks, which now act in close co-operation with other arms, have been destroyed.

One must also count as negative factors the lengthening of the German communication lines and the dangers attendant upon the concentration of a large force in the Caucasus separated from the main front. The heavy strain that the intensity of the fighting imposes on the mechanised vehicles as well as on the man-power is bound to affect the momentum of the offensive. Within Germany transport difficulties increase and there is an acute shortage of locomotives and trucks. All reports indicate that the German morale is still declining and that underground activities against the Nazi

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regime are increasing. On the other hand, despite severe losses and the bitterness of retreat the Soviet Information Bureau is able to refer to the "enhanced organisation and staunchness of the Red Army" in 1942, in comparison with 1941.

There is little reason to succumb to the fascination of German "strength," writes General Shilovsky, a Soviet staff officer who accompanied Molotov to London, in an article on the lessons of the German rout in 1918. Shilovsky continues:—

When Germany, after having seized tremendous territories, was already on the eve of catastrophe, the General Staffs of England and France still considered that her military might could not be broken before 1919. So strong was the misleading impression created by Germany's spectacular military successes. Germany's rout in the first world war came as a result of joint active operations by the Allies, who were superior in strength and resources. In four years of war the German army won no small number of battles, captured large territories, and to the very last fought on foreign territory. In the long run, however, it gorged itself to death with victory, and in November, 1918, Germany capitulated.

To-day, too, the Germans are conducting big offensive operations and trumpeting about their victories. But the experience of history shows that in spite of her temporary successes Germany can be defeated. This collapse will not come of itself, but as the result of a bloody and stubborn struggle.

This summing up of the military lessons of the last war is a polite but pointed reminder of the differences between Britain and the Soviet Union in the sphere of strategy which were undoubtedly discussed during the Churchill-Stalin negotiations in Moscow. These negotiations, described by *Pravda* "as a major political defeat for Hitler," resulted in a reaffirmation of the close friendship and understanding between the Soviet Union, Britain and the United States. In the sphere of military action "a number of decisions were reached covering the field of war against Hitlerite Germany and her associates in Europe."

These decisions undoubtedly herald the introduction of a more offensive spirit into the conduct of British military operations. This is greatly to be welcomed, especially if one of the results is the application of a more consistent and united strategy, and a stronger fight against the Munichites.

It is difficult to believe that a consistent strategy is being applied by all concerned. Certainly those air marshals who are permitted to parade their pet theory of victory through the bomber are expressing views in direct conflict with the official Government opinion, endorsed by the Chief of the General Staff, on the urgency of the creation of the Second Front in Europe. (See communique of June 11 on Molotov talks.) These air marshals appear to be sublimely indifferent to what must be done in order immediately to influence the fighting in the East, and in the Second Front they are not interested one little bit, whether it is proposed for 1942, 1943 or 1944. They stake everything on the offensive power of the heavy bomber (and the defensive qualities of the English Channel!) regardless of the might of the Luftwaffe, which could be released for battle with the R.A.F. and directed against Britain once Hitler succeeded in carrying out his immediate aims on the Eastern Front.

The school of thought that rejects the victory - through - bombing theory and stands for the Second Front, but only in 1943 or 1944, is in conflict with the air marshals, but for the time being at least is mainly relying on the bomber and the Channel. At the same time it should be noted that offensive action in Libya, although not a substitute for the Second Front, could be a means of bringing a certain relief to the hard-pressed Red Army.

The changes in the Middle East Command and the increased naval activity in the Mediterranean suggest that an abandonment of defensive tactics is contemplated. We have vast forces in the Middle East of which only a tiny proportion have ever been used in the desert fighting.

Rommel's hopes of reaching Alexandria and the Suez were frustrated by the dogged resistance of the Eighth Army, but it is certain that he will attack again. According to reports from Soviet sources, part of the Luftwaffe was transferred from Egypt to the Don and this may account for the holding up of a further Rommel offensive. Nevertheless, the hour of decision in Egypt is approaching. The Suez is threatened. The British forces must resort to a bold offensive policy and utilise the powerful reserves in the Middle East area : they must do this as much in their own urgent military interests as those of the Red Army.

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The American attack on the Solomon Islands, which began on August 8, is a welcome example of initiative directed against the Japanese preparations for an attack on Australia, but this does not mean that the Allies have now succeeded in passing to the general offensive or that the second stage of the Japanese operations in the Pacific have been frustrated. Neither can the events there exercise an immediate influence on the course of military events in Europe.

Allied air and naval strength in the Pacific has grown considerably during recent months and heavy losses were inflicted on the Japanese when they attempted to seize Midway Island in June. But the Japanese have been obviously taking full advantage of the long lull in order to strengthen their lines of communications and their new jumping-off grounds. The seizure of the Aleutian Islands has strengthened the strategical position of the Japanese and has enabled them to establish a base for striking at the American supply route to the Soviet Union. The cutting of the Burma Road has deprived the Chinese armies of vital supplies, has weakened their offensive power and has enabled the Japanese to wage new offensives on Chinese soil aimed at pinning down the Chinese forces, securing control over air bases that could be used for the bombing of Japan and Japanese communications and cutting the land supply route through which Soviet armaments and war materials continue to arrive.

Where will the Japanese strike next? This is the question that must be faced, as their offensive power has not yet been undermined. According to Chungking the bulk of the Japanese army is distributed over Manchukuo, Burma and China, with the main concentrations in Manchukuo, facing Mongolia and the maritime provinces of the Soviet Far East. An attack on India offers tempting prospects now that the repressive policy of the Government has succeeded in arousing such bitterness amongst the Indian masses and continues to be directed against the formation of a provisional National Government without which the Indian people cannot be rallied in their full strength to meet the threatened invasion. On the other hand, the Japanese offensive may be directed against Australia in the event of the present fighting in Papua and the Solomon Islands turning in their favour. Finally, there is the question mark that must be put against Japanese intentions in relation to the Soviet Union. Of late there has been an increase in the rumours about Japan's hostile intentions which suggests that the usual type of sudden blow will be struck in the event of a further deterioration of the Soviet military position in Europe. But the Japanese know, of course, that Vladivostock will not be a Pearl Harbour.

This review of the various fronts again leads to the conclusion that the only way to upset the world strategy of the Fascist powers is by the opening of the Second Front in Europe which would draw off part of the forces that Hitler is now concentrating against Stalingrad and, incidentally, bring relief to our armies in the Middle East and finally end the Fascist dream of a Hitler-Tojo junction to India.

The case for the immediate opening of the Second Front has been strongly reinforced by the positive experiences of the enlarged raid by shock troops on Dieppe which further stimulated the struggle of the French people and called forth great enthusiasm throughout Britain. Valuable experience has been gained in the landing of tanks and the effective protection that the R.A.F. can render. But such raids are not yet the Second Front.

The Second Front demand is now so overwhelmingly supported by the masses and the case for it is so startlingly clear that Government spokesmen have been compelled to renounce arguments based on the exposition of the old strategical conceptions, namely, that Britain's main task is to guard this island against the dangers of invasion and to scatter what troops can be spared in various parts of the world in defence of imperial strong points. The march of events has demonstrated the bankruptcy of this policy of passivity and has compelled the recognition, although not yet the operation, of a strategy based on the full use of Britain's land forces on the soil of Europe, as well as the Navy and Air Force.

Officially, only so-called practical arguments are put forward against the operation of the new strategy, although the resistance has far deeper roots. All opponents of the Second Front play a trump card: shipping, this is the argument

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of the Munichites, of the victory-through-bombing school and also of those who accept the new strategy but who, appalled by the magnitude of the task, plead for delay.

That the shipping position is grave is undeniable. Is it worse to-day than it was a year ago? There are no figures to go by, but it is officially stated that the situation has worsened. Delay has not strengthened our shipping position and further delay is hardly likely to do so. To divert shipping for a Second Front in Europe may mean risks elsewhere, but these will have to be faced as the biggest risk of all is that of hanging on in the hope that things will improve. In any case, much of the type of shipping required (invasion barges and coastal steamers) necessary for the landing and supply of troops should now be available. Have we not had fourteen months to prepare?

Neither Britain nor America are shipless countries. Construction may not yet be keeping pace with destruction, but there is no reason why this should not be possible of achievement if the methods of anti-U-boat warfare are improved and vested interests in the shipbuilding industry are swept aside. The mass production of ships for wartime purposes is a realisable policy, as American experiences have already proved.

The opening of the Second Front in Europe is the key to victory. Further delay is dangerous to the extreme. There is the danger that the Nazis will secure far-reaching successes on the Eastern Front, that the heroic mood of the enslaved peoples of Europe will be turned by frustration into channels of desperation and despair and that the people of Britain will turn with bitterness against those who ignore the lessons of history and fail to grasp glorious opportunities. The moment is grave. Let the Government take heed.

T. U. C. 1942

by ARTHUR HORNER

(President, South Wales Mineworkers' Federation)

NEVER before in our whole history have we been faced by such dangers as those which now threaten from the Fascist powers, and never before in the three generations of its existence has the Trades Union Congress had to face a parallel situation. This autumn it is indeed the crisis of the British people.

Since the last Congress, in September, 1941, the power of the Axis has been greatly increased, millions have faced death, whole peoples have been seized by its armies, the balance of populations and raw materials has altered. On the other hand, the United States of America and other powers of the western hemisphere (including now Brazil) have entered the conflict on our side, whilst on the eastern front the heroic resistance of the Red Armies has sustained the Allies everywhere.

The present situation, with the drive of Von Bock into the Caucasus following on the setback in Libya, demands the maximum effort and the straining of every resource to defeat the enemy. On the Trades Union Congress there falls a very special responsibility. For while the Labour movement supports Churchill's National Government, which is primarily responsible for the conduct of the war, that Government derives in part from the Labour movement and must be sustained not in a formal way arising from a decision once given, but by the stimulus of continuous active support and criticism. Composed of representatives of the organised workers, the Trades Union Congress can do mighty deeds to strengthen the core of resistance of the British people.

All the gigantic issues of the war are reflected in the Agenda and also appear to greater or lesser extent in the Report of the General Council. Amongst these issues the foremost is the life and death question of the Second Front in Europe in 1942, on which an understanding was reached three months ago between the Governments of Britain, the United States of America and the U.S.S.R. The Amalgamated Engineering Union, whose members are responsible for the actual weapons to equip our troops and for assisting to equip those of our Allies, have

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placed a resolution on this issue on the Agenda.

Mr. Jack Tanner, the President of the A.E.U., made a striking call for the immediate opening of a Second Front at the recent International Metal Workers Conference at Blackpool.

The Miners' Federation of Great Britain Annual Conference in July made a similar demand, at the same time pointing out that grave sacrifice will be necessary to sustain such an effort.

Executives of Unions, like the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, etc., have urged the organisation of the Second Front, and so too have the July Conferences of the National Union of Railwaymen and Electrical Trades Union.

All over the country tremendous demonstrations have taken place. The unexampled July 26 demonstration in Trafalgar Square of 60,000 addressed by Will Lawther, President of the M.F.G.B., John Horner, Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, and many M.P.'s and political leaders, is typical of feelings that are inevitably bound to be reflected among the delegates. The Soviet Trade Unionists will certainly be looking to our Congress to respond to the demands posed by the critical position of the war in which we now find ourselves.

Indeed, by the agreement entered into between our Congress and the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, we have certain common tasks and special responsibilities. This Anglo-Soviet Committee and the activities connected with the visit of our delegates of Moscow, and the return visit of the Soviet Trade Unions here, will come up for review and will give the opportunity to impart a renewed impetus to the fullest carrying out of the obligations which our movement has undertaken. We will do our utmost, of that I am sure, but we must do it in the consciousness that what we have done and what we have suffered is as nothing to the agonies that have been undergone by our fellow Trade Unionists in the U.S.S.R.

Following the setting up of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee, Sir Walter Citrine, as Secretary of Congress, visited the United States of America with the object of bringing the American Trade Unions into association with the Anglo-Soviet Joint Committee. He failed to win the American Federation of Labor to agree to this and the outcome of his visit is limited to the setting up of an Anglo-American Trade Union Committee. But in the U.S.A. there are not one, but several Trade Union movements; and there has been some criticism from the Council of Industrial Organisations and from the Railway Brotherhoods that the Trades Union Congress should appear to accept the American Federation of Labor as the sole representative of American Labour. Both these bodies are independent of the American Federation of Labor, and altogether represent more trade unionists than are organised under its banner. The C.I.O., which organises the Industrial Unions (as distinct from the Craft Unions in the A.F. of L.) seems to be much more favourably disposed towards the Soviet Trade Unions than the A.F. of L. After the enthusiastic welcome given by the British trade unionists to the Edinburgh decision for Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Unity, there is natural disappointment at the lack of progress in bringing in the American Craft Unions; and delegates will look forward with interest to Sir Walter Citrine's report. The resolution of the Tailors and Garment Workers obviously desires that further progress should be made in these efforts "in the spirit of international solidarity to develop wartime relationship between the Trade Unions of all the United Nations, leading to the immediate formation of a United Trade Council."

There are difficulties, of course, in certain quarters which were anticipated, but the more completely we fulfil our obligations and develop our Anglo-Soviet Agreement the better will be the opportunity to overcome them. Indeed, if we solve the question of the Second Front most other things will follow, and present difficulties will disappear.

Arising directly out of that agreement, and especially Clause 4 :—

> Strengthening of the industrial efforts of both countries for the purpose of the utmost extension of the production of tanks, aeroplanes, guns, shells and other munitions

are a number of questions incidental to success in this; and these are dealt with in a series of resolutions including such questions as participation by workers in managements, planning, control of industries, removal of inefficient manage-

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ments, ministry of supply "controls," use of scientific and technical resources. These are bound to arouse a good deal of discussion.

The foremost question in connection with production is that of setting up efficient Joint Production Committees. Our experience in the Mining Industry, in which we have sought to establish Joint Pit Production Committees, has shown that the mere formal establishment of Joint Production Committees does not necessarily bring about the joint production effort so essential for maximum production.

We have learned that for success in this effort, two changes in mental outlook must be brought about quickly :—

(*a*) Managements must be receptive of ideas propounded by workers and must try these ideas out in practice. The resentment which supervisory staffs express against proposals presented by ordinary workmen must cease. They cannot any longer be permitted to treat suggestions from workers as objective criticisms of their efficiency if they prove effective in increasing production.

(*b*) Workers must set on one side the age-old habit of class existence, *i.e.*, to regard as evil from a working class point of view everything which savours of rationalisation or which favours efficiency in production, because it may benefit the employer. He must appreciate that victory over the Axis powers represents the highest form of working class success, and that defeat through lack of effort on our part for any reason whatsoever, will represent the greatest betrayal of true working class interests.

The working of Joint Production Committees will be effective in increasing production, only if there is conviction that it is essential to the avoidance of defeat and the winning of victory.

Once this conviction is secured, secondary considerations fall into their subordinate place, initiative is unleashed, and unprecedented energy becomes evident. In this connection and so as to secure widespread conviction quickly the ban upon the *Daily Worker* should be removed forthwith, so that a class explanation might be given to the workers of the importance of "more production."

It would place this question in its proper place in the eyes of all honest workers, as the paramount duty and obligation of every member of the British Community.

The removal of the ban on the *Daily Worker* is supported by no fewer than seven separate resolutions. It must be a long time since at any Trades Union Congress there was such an array of powerful Unions putting down similar resolutions on one subject. The National Union of Railwaymen, the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, the National Union of Journalists, the Association of Engineering Shipbuilding Draughtsmen, the Scottish Painters and the Miners' Federation of Great Britain unite on this issue. It is fairly certain, following the Labour Party Conference decision and in spite of any efforts (which it appears are being made) to rally an opposition, that the Congress will decide for the lifting of the ban. I would say that the question at issue is the size of the majority, and how much longer is the Government going to flout the will of the majority of the people of Britain before it decides, as inevitably it must, to give this expression to the mass popular will.

The needs of democracy and of maximum anti-Fascist unity are also bound up with two other issues : (1) the issue of what was once called the Black Circular, and (2) that which I may call the Black Act of 1927. Four Unions, headed by the A.E.U., urge Congress to withdraw Circular 16, passed in 1934. Circular 16 discriminates mainly against Communists and while some Unions have never applied the principles of Circular 16 against their Communist members, others have done so. The General Council has also applied this discrimination in the Trades Councils of England and Wales in order to prevent Communists acting as delegates or holding positions. In Scotland the Scottish Trades Union Congress has never operated this discrimination in the Trades Councils. The resolutions indicate a growing feeling in favour of a reversal of this policy embodied in Circular 16. It does appear ridiculous that whilst we rightly approve of Sir Walter Citrine with his Communist counterpart, Comrade Shvernik, of the Soviet Trade Unions, jointly working together and appealing for the maximum of both peoples in the common struggle against Fascism, or Sir Walter Citrine working

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with employers who are Tories or Liberals, for the same end, but disbanding Trades Councils that dare to associate with Communists in establishing United Working Class action.

Every year since its enactment there have been resolutions on the Agenda of the T.U.C. dealing with the hated Trades Disputes and Trade Union Act of 1927. This Congress will have three resolutions before it all aimed at repealing or amending the Act. Feeling was very high last year on this question and it has increased in the interval. The continuance of this measure is indefensible and it is certain that Congress will demand action by the Labour members of the Government to end this hamstringing Act. Delegates are still smarting under the memory of the late Neville Chamberlain's patronising promise to reconsider the position if the trade unionists were "good boys" during the war. It is clear that no Government could exist in this country during this war without the support of the Unions. The Unions therefore feel all the more keenly the continuance of this disabling measure in view of the rôle they are playing in this war.

Another aspect of the war effort is dealt with in a number of resolutions which call for increased service pay, increased dependants and children's allowances and pensions, rights of disabled servicemen. Pay and allowances are contrasted with increased cost of living and their unfavourable relations to the "superior rates paid to men in the fighting services of the Dominions and of the United States." The strong feelings of the Trade Union movement on this matter is bound to be revealed in Congress. The same applies to the resolutions for increases of Old Age Pensions.

The demand for equal pay for equal work for women is made by the Railway Clerks and the Bank Officer's Guild. This call for the "rate for the job" recurs again in a resolution from the National Union of General and Municipal Workers. Provision of training for women, their reinstatement in former occupations after the war, and the health of expectant mothers, are the subject of further resolutions reflecting the growing importance of women in the industrial war effort of this country. The N.U.D.A.W. father a highly controversial subject in their resolution calling for the introduction of a scheme of Family Allowances. This is likely to be opposed by a number of Unions.

Another such issue is that of the Labour Research Department, which has done yeoman service to the trade union movement.

The T.U.C. General Council have down three proposals to amend Standing Orders of Congress. Section C would read as follows: "That the General Council should be empowered between Congress Meetings to make any alteration to the Standing Orders which it deems necessary subject to any such alteration being confirmed by the next Congress, any such alteration to be binding until overruled by the Congress."

The Trade Unions are bound to ask what new situation has arisen or is likely to arise that necessitates such powers being given to the General Council. The Unions will want to know why any proposed changes in standing orders should not in the first case come before Congress for consideration and debate, so that Congress will know *before* they operate, what changes it is voting on.

The resolution of the N.U.R. on the structure and work of Trade Unions, calls for an examination in order to determine:—

(1) Where competition and overlapping exist.
(2) Where such structure is uneconomic.
(3) Where policy is diverse within an Industry.

The resolution of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers would appear to counter this idea. A sharp discussion is inevitable here.

A number of other resolutions are down dealing with post-war reconstruction and economic planning, but the decisive questions—apart from India, with its overwhelming importance for Congress—are those touched on in this outline.

From this Congress, meeting in the most critical period of our history, must come the rededication of our movement to the aim of victory over the forces which threaten to destroy the liberty of all mankind for generations to come. We must organise and work to this end until victory is won.

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Situation in the U.S.S.R.

The need for a Second Front

by J. H. POTTS

[Mr. Potts, at the close of his tenure of the presidency of the National Union of Railwaymen, was sent as their delegate to the U.S.S.R., where he spent several months in the spring and summer of this year. During this time he travelled widely on the Soviet railway systems. The LABOUR MONTHLY *gladly prints this article from one who was able to view the situation with a background of special experience.*—ED. L.M.]

IT is hardly necessary to go over all the events of the war situation prior to June 1941, as these are well known to everyone. However, I feel that certain aspects should be emphasised as a prelude to the remarks I am going to make on the present situation on the Russian Western Front.

Following the collapse of France and the subsequent withdrawal of the British Expeditionary Force from France and Belgium, the British Empire was left to face the full weight of the Axis Powers. The situation was indeed serious and precarious. The civilian population of Great Britain was compelled to endure the most intense and vicious raids that the world has ever yet seen. To the everlasting credit of the people of these Isles, despite the inadequacy of the existing air raid precautions, they stood up to the bombings with a courage that gained them the admiration of the whole world.

Matters looked very black. There was also considerable disquiet in the minds of most people regarding the treaty that had been agreed upon by the U.S.S.R. and Germany. Propagandists, publicists, military strategists, politicians and many others let themselves go to extremes in their endeavours to cover this situation as a cloak for complete ignorance therein towards the historical background of this event. I have no desire to labour this point, but having regard to the recent utterances of certain responsible Parliamentary representatives, I make the suggestion that a little time given to the study of the international situation prior to September, 1939, subsequent to that time, and up to June, 1941, would enable these people and everyone else to get the correct perspective of the present situation. Just a cursory examination of political economy would have told them all that it was impossible for there to be any reconciliation between Fascism and the Soviet system.

At this stage, however, there should be complete unanimity on the point that every move made by the U.S.S.R. prior to June 1941 has been justified: and all people that have taken any trouble at all in this matter must fully understand the past is only useful in so far as it helps us to understand the present and make plans for the future.

Hundreds of speeches have been made and numerous articles written on the question of the Second Front, not merely by the present advocates of this policy, but by practically all military strategists of any standing and many politicians of high rank, also by many well-known experts on international politics. Practically all these people were in agreement upon at least two major points: (1) That the Axis Powers could only be completely and finally defeated by bringing them to action on land; (2) after argument of the pros and cons of the effectiveness of the operation of the blockade, and also of whether complete subjugation can be obtained by intense aerial bombardment, after much serious consideration on these points, that whilst there would be considerable material damage and serious dislocation of their internal machinery, both industrially and socially, the powerful Nazi military machine must be destroyed before any lasting peace is possible.

While the possibility to compel the Axis Powers to fight a major war on two fronts has existed ever since the Germans made their treacherous attack on the U.S.S.R. in June, 1941, yet up to the moment there is too little evidence of the intention to implement the promises that have been given. Many speeches, it is true, have been and are being made on this subject, everyone agreeing that our Russian comrades are making a gallant stand against the Nazi hordes. Reams of praise are being poured out to the Russian Red Army for the magnificent fight they are making. I know, arising from my

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personal experiences in the U.S.S.R., that the Russians, whilst appreciating these statements, are anxiously awaiting the translation of our pledges into concrete reality. This action must take place immediately, or it may be too late.

I am not a military expert, but nevertheless would like to draw attention to the military situation that confronts both the U.S.S.R. and this country. Everyone can follow the progress of the war on the Russian Western Front. Numerous maps and diagrams are being produced in newspapers, magazines and periodicals, arising from which everybody is convinced that the situation is most serious. My opinion is that we can safely leave the conduct of the war on this front to the Russians themselves. During my journeys through the Soviet Union I saw and learnt sufficient to be convinced that despite the many reverses they have suffered and will perhaps have to continue to suffer, the Russians will ultimately triumph.

The attitude of the Russian people towards the war is in strong contrast to that of the people of Great Britain. Everywhere in the Soviet Union you notice the severe demeanour of the people. Only one thing matters: that is the final and overwhelming defeat of Fascism.

All individual and collective privileges have been suspended, non - essential buying is completely eliminated by the simple method of no offering for sale of any commodity not necessary for the furtherance of the war effort. All petrol-driven vehicles have been withdrawn from the streets of the cities and towns. In Moscow, anyone wishing to travel in the city must use either the trams or the Metro; this means considerable inconvenience, but no one minds this, as there is complete agreement that war needs come first.

Travel on the railways is also strictly controlled, no one being allowed to travel without a permit. Trains are run to and from the factories for workpeople on war production. Long distance travel is reduced to a minimum necessary for essential war work. The Russians are not asked "Is your journey necessary?"; they are told whether it is or not; and they must first satisfy the responsible authority that their journey is necessary, and then they must give preference to all service men who may be travelling in the same direction. Travellers on passenger trains must expect delays, as these trains are held up sometimes for several hours to facilitate the movement of freight trains, and trains carrying troops and materials to the Western Front. Throughout the whole of my forty-eight days' train journey I never heard one single complaint about these delays.

I visited railway depots, both locomotive and carriage and wagon, also aircraft and tank factories. I had the opportunity of seeing the vast industrial organisation the Russians have built in the Urals and also as far out as Siberia. Railway depots are not only carrying on the maintenance and repair of rolling stock, but are also producing war materials. At some depots I saw complete armoured trains that had been built by the workers in their free time, and all the material used was paid for out of their earnings. I found that the Russians' capacity for organisation was tremendous. The intensity of all forms of labour is at the maximum. The morale of the people is excellent. Defeatism has no place in the Russian scheme of things.

At all the meetings at which I spoke, both workshop and public, I always heard two things. First, the Russian workers pledge themselves to make every sacrifice possible for the purpose of carrying out the will of their leader—Comrade Stalin —that "Fascism must be destroyed in 1942." Second, they welcome the unity between the U.S.S.R. and Great Britain, and appreciate the good work that Britain is doing in their own sphere of battle. They are grateful for the help that is being sent them in the shape of airplanes, tanks, other war materials, Red Cross stores and food, but feel that if they are to gain their objective at the earliest possible moment thereby saving the loss of many valuable lives and the further devastation of their country, Britain must commence the much-talked-of Second Front.

The Russians have faith in us. Do not let us fail them. Above all, we must remember this is not an appeal to save Russia, but it is an effort to bring the whole of the Allied war machine into immediate use for the purpose of destroying Fascism and ensuring the liberty of freedom-loving people everywhere.

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The advocates of a Second Front in Europe are often charged with being impractical. They are asked to be realists. They are told we cannot risk another Dunkirk. They are reminded of Narvik, Greece, Crete, Libya, Singapore, etc. It is said that we are not yet prepared, that the time is not opportune, and above all they must leave this question to the people who know best. These are the main points of the negative side of this question.

What are the positive views? The following are what I consider to be the most important factors. The cream, if not the full weight, of the Axis Forces is engaged on the Russian Front. They have to protect a coast-line stretching from Narvik to the Pyrenees. They are compelled to keep an army of occupation in many hostile countries. They have ranged against them the three greatest Powers in the world, *i.e.*, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., the British Empire, plus the organised free peoples of many of the occupied countries.

We have reached parity with the Germans in the air, our machines are superior to theirs, our Air Force personnel is the finest the world has ever seen. On the sea the Navy, despite losses sustained, is still vastly superior to the Axis Navies, the work and organisation of our Navy is 100 per cent. efficient, the personnel is still up to the old traditions. After three years of intensive organisation our land forces, despite many setbacks, must be the greatest and best equipped military machine that has ever been assembled by the British Empire.

Industrially, the same standards apply. Government ordnance factories have sprung up like mushrooms throughout the length and breadth of the land. All privately controlled industry is now harnessed to the war effort. In the words of a member of the Government, "We are gradually approaching the peak of our production effort. We have now become the arsenal of Democracy."

What then are we awaiting? Have we made our own "Maginot Line" in the sea that surrounds us? Are we still sitting like frightened rabbits waiting for the enemy to attack us? The British Army is anxiously waiting the opportunity to show its mettle. Their spirit is the spirit of the "Old Contemptibles." Their calibre and courage is the same as the men that fought at Ypres, Neuve Chapelle, Loos, the Somme, Cambrai, Messines Ridge and the Heights of Passchendaele. We know, and they know, that victory can only come when the Axis military machine is finally destroyed. Let us give them their chance.

I appeal to the people of Britain to emulate the example set by the Russians. We must make our supreme effort *now*, before it becomes too late.

I make my appeal to employer and employee alike. We cannot expect to maintain our pre-war privileges. We cannot continue with our old methods of industry. We must unite in one common cause, just as our Russian allies have done, that cause being the final and everlasting defeat of Fascism.

The creation of a Second Front in Europe will not only relieve the pressure on the Russian Western Front, it will dispel that terrible apathy and complacency that is now eating its way into the very heart of the British public. The main enemy we have to face is within ourselves. Let us conquer this deplorable lassitude that has now beset us. Let us sound our clarion call and let that call be the one that I heard throughout the whole of the Soviet Union: "Fascism must be destroyed in 1942."

By precept and example we must demonstrate to the world that we stand by all the implications of the recent Pact between three great countries—U.S.A., U.S.S.R. and Great Britain, and the finest example would be—START THE SECOND FRONT NOW!

IF *you originally placed your order for R. Palme Dutt's book (Private Edition for* LABOUR MONTHLY *readers) through a bookshop or through a private individual or an organisation and have not yet received BRITAIN IN THE WORLD FRONT, you should immediately get into touch with such bookshop, etc., and ask for your copy. But if you were not an original subscriber, it is now only possible to buy a 5s. copy at a bookshop—or ask for it at your Public Library.*

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Labour in the National Front

by EMILE BURNS

THIS is a people's war. In Britain millions of the people are in the armed forces, the civil defence services, land and sea transport, in the factories and mines, seriously striving to "do their bit" in a struggle which they recognise as their own.

But the tragedy of the situation is that the Labour movement, the organised section of the workers which is best able to express the true interests of the people and draw around it all other sections, is as yet playing so small a part in influencing the direction and strategy of the fight. And in saying this I do not mean merely that there is little leadership coming from the Labour Ministers in the Government, or from the Labour Party National Executive, or the T.U.C. General Council, or the Co-operative Union Executive. I mean also that at best only a few Trade Union Executives, District Committees and Branches, only a few Labour Parties and Trades Councils, only a few Co-operative Societies and organisations, are even beginning to use their enormous potential strength and political influence to mould the shape of things present and to come. For the most part these organisations are passively awaiting the outcome of events in which their very existence is at stake; or if they are active, their activity is on a narrow, sectional scale, completely out of relation to the gigantic issues facing the British people.

Why is this so, and what can be done to change this situation?

In order to understand why the Labour movement is playing such an ineffective part in this decisive period, we must realise that this is not an entirely new feature. On the contrary, if we look only at the years since Hitler came to power in Germany, we can see how small was the part played by the British Labour movement in the building up of the popular forces against Fascism, in the course of the Italo-Abyssinian war, in the course of the Spanish Republican struggle, in the days when Austria and Czechoslovakia were sacrificed, in the days of the struggle for the international peace front that could have prevented the war.

Looking back on those days, is there anyone in the Labour movement that can fail to see that the root cause of British Labour's weakness was not so much the lack of initiative on the part of leaders, but *their wrong policy*, and in particular their obstinate refusal to mobilise a united British Labour movement, alongside the Soviet people and the popular front movements on the Continent, for the common struggle against Fascism and the friends of Fascism?

In spite of this leadership, the understanding of the need for unity grew within the British Labour movement and more and more of the lower organisations took part in united action for Spain, against Munich, and for the international peace front against Fascism. But instead of responding to what was obviously the growing feeling within the Labour movement, the leadership tightened the regulations against unity, expelled Cripps for preaching unity and Pritt for defending the Soviet Union, and disintegrated the most active organisations within the movement.

That disastrous policy is still being pursued. The passivity and lack of leadership in connection with the major political developments of to-day is only partially due to the Labour leaders' lack of political courage; the main cause is their continued splitting of the movement, their bans on united activity which can only act as a brake on all activity and therefore hold back the whole movement from developing its strength and initiative.

Largely because of this policy, and only partially because of war conditions, the individual membership of the Labour Party has dropped by half during the last four years; the attendance at Trade Union Branches is almost everywhere poor; and the great majority of Labour Parties and Trades Councils are not fully representative of the organisations that are eligible to affiliate, while the delegates from affiliated organisations do not attend regularly and are not striving to make these bodies really active and influential.

But it would be a profound mistake to see only this side of the picture. All

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through the Spain days, the Munich period and the fight for the international peace front, there was developing within the Labour organisations an opposition to the fatal policy of the leadership, and in this period that opposition is growing very rapidly. There is a really widespread desire for greater activity and more initiative, and this is no longer confined to local organisations, but has already shown itself in the decisions of National Trade Unions and the work of their Executives. The demands for the Second Front, for the lifting of the ban on the *Daily Worker*, illustrate this, as well as the splendid action of the Scottish Mine Workers, for example, to ensure a greater output of coal.

We have therefore to see that within the Labour movement a struggle is taking place between two tendencies—the one towards passivity, which fights by splitting off the most active workers; the other towards butting in on events, developing Labour's influence by political activity, and therefore welcoming unity in action with the Communist Party.

It is no exaggeration to say that the future of the British people depends on the outcome of the struggle between these tendencies in the Labour movement. So long as the passive, splitting tendency continues to dominate the movement, British Labour cannot play that decisive part in shaping events which alone can save the whole people from the Fascist peril and lead forward to a Socialist Britain.

We have only to look at the utter confusion that exists among many sections, both within the working class and outside it, to realise how true this is.

Take the question of national unity, which is so vital a condition for the maintenance of international unity in the fight against the Axis Powers. The Labour leadership is not clearly and decisively for national unity, for mobilising the whole people behind the Government of national unity. On the contrary, the Labour leaders want a limited unity—one that excludes the Communists. The result is that considerable sections of the Labour Party and its affiliated organisations want no unity at all—they want Labour Ministers to come out of the Government, they want to fight Government candidates who are Tories at by-elections. And groups outside the Labour movement seeing no real Labour lead for national unity, carry the splitting process further and set up their 1941 Committee, their Forward March organisation, their Common Wealth Party, and all kinds of splitting candidates contest by-elections All these divisions give the opportunity on the one hand to careerists of all kinds, and on the other to the enemies of the national purpose—the Munichites, the enemies of the Soviet Union, the friends of Hitler, the Trotskyists.

But a united Labour movement, working with a clear policy of national unity, could rally every section that is for an Allied victory over Fascism, and absolutely isolate the open and concealed friends of Hitler in Britain.

It is the same with the issue of the Second Front, on which a speedy victory depends. Instead of expressing and leading the great volume of working class opinion for the Second Front, the Labour leaders allow themselves to become spokesmen for the most reactionary elements around the Government, who do not want the Second Front because it would destroy Fascism. When, in spite of what the Labour leaders say, the demand for the Second Front grows, the Labour leaders do their utmost to prevent Labour individuals or organisations taking part in the campaign, and do everything they can to discredit it. The result is the confusion of the Labour movement on this issue, the spreading of the sense of frustration through the workers in and out of uniform, while the pro-Fascists achieve their main immediate object of preventing the Second Front.

In the case of India the direct harm done by the attitude of the Labour leaders spreads beyond this country. Their failure to mobilise the British Labour movement for a real national Government for India led to the futile proposals taken by Cripps to India and the breakdown of negotiations; and this has led to confusion not only in Britain, but also in India, the return of Gandhi's fatal influence within the Indian National Congress, the ill-conceived threat of civil disobedience, and the present disastrous situation there.

The mobilisation of a united British Labour movement for a national Government for India could have prevented this whole chain of disasters.

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On all these issues, and in fact on every major political issue, the Labour leadership's fear of a united and vigorous movement has resulted in the Labour movement having little or no influence on the policy of the Government, and therefore reactionary circles have been able to reap the benefit. The accumulation of these reactionary policies opens the door wide to every disruptive element, and to "leftist" tendencies within the Labour movement itself.

What then is to be done?

Write off the Labour movement as hopeless, and gather under the banner of J. B. Priestley and Sir Richard Acland?

Of course not. The Labour leadership is not the Labour movement. The passive, timid, splitting line of the Labour leaders is not the line of the vast majority within the Labour movement. It is a case of giving expression to the desires and the mood of the organised working class, for action, for the offensive, for unity, for a Labour movement whose activity and courage will inspire the whole people and be the determining factor in the country's policy. Such a movement can only be irresistible if the rank and file make up their minds to build it, though its growth can be immensely helped forward by the action of those in leading circles of the Labour movement who see the urgent need for a changed outlook.

Such a movement is already taking shape. But its progress is far too slow for days like these. The decisive stage of the war is on us, and as yet the British Labour movement is not playing the part that it should and must play. It is not good enough for the rank and file to put all the blame on the leaders. Every member and organisation in the Labour movement, from National Executive to local Branch, must share responsibility for the present state of things, and equally must take steps to change it.

The first step must be activity on the main issues of the day—above all, the Second Front. And activity on every issue raises at the same time the question of unity, which must be solved in the course of activity. Passivity must be broken down by activity, splitting by united action everywhere. Only by the action of the individuals forming part of the Labour movement can the movement itself be brought into action. But the individual members can only achieve this if they themselves refuse to be distracted by sectional interests or "leftist" tendencies from the central task for the Labour movement and the whole people—the speediest destruction of Fascism.

Progress or Reaction in Education

by MARY EPSTEIN

THE chaos and lack of planning characteristic of industry and commerce also characterise our English educational system.* Secure in its mastery over a world market, British capitalism for long saw no danger to itself from foreign rivalry and only unwillingly and under pressure conceded the demand for a better education of the mass of the people. Our patchwork educational system still reflects the reactionary and out-of-date features of past decades; it still acts as a fetter on national progress. This is now becoming clearer than ever before under the shock of war.

It is thus probable that the first item in the promised programme for post-war reconstruction will be an Education Bill, to be introduced in the near future. The next few months have been described by the President of the Board of Education as "the formative period." Already negotiations, particularly with the churches and the aristocratic "public" schools, are proceeding behind the scenes, while the political parties and educational organisations have published comprehensive programmes.

As in the last war, so now, on an even wider scale, the governing class is compelled to envisage an advance in education. It is difficult to defend a system which ends the education of three out of

* This article deals with England and Wales, not with Scotland, where the system differs in certain respects.

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every four children at 14 and throws them on to the labour market at the mercy of trade fluctuations and unscrupulous exploiters of juvenile labour. Indeed, there is widespread recognition of the inadequacy of the present educational system and of its class nature. The progress of education in this country has been halted, and even in some respects has been in decline, since the May Report of 1931. The Bill for raising the school-leaving age to 15, passed by the second Labour Government but rejected by the House of Lords, reappeared in 1936, but in a form so emasculated as to be almost worthless. This Bill was balm to the hearts of the employers of cheap labour; though the age of leaving was raised, exemptions for "beneficial employment and home duties" were allowed and in many districts this exemption covered more than 90 per cent. of the school population; no maintenance allowances were granted. In 1932, "special places" at the secondary schools were substituted for "free places," that is to say, a means test is applied after the entrance examination and the parents may be required to pay all or part of the fees. Thus many parents, being unable to pay, have had to refuse the special places offered to their children, and the number of children in the secondary schools receiving free education has declined in the past ten years. In 1937 only 46.5 per cent. paid no fees. At the same time the fees in secondary schools were raised.

It is well known that the impact of the war was disastrous to education. The ill-planned evacuation scheme, despite the devoted efforts of teachers and foster-parents, resulted in some areas in conditions which more resembled the nineteenth than the twentieth century. Many children had no schooling whatever for a long period, still more went on half-time. Buildings were commandeered for other purposes, classes grew enormously in size, numbers in the secondary schools still further declined.

At the same time the public became conscious of the defects in the education system. The last figures available reveal 2,647 classes with more than 50 pupils and more than 2,000,000 children in classes of 40 pupils or more. There are still 40,000 teachers receiving, with war bonus, less than £3 10s. a week, and some 25,000 uncertificated teachers out of a total of 180,000 in the elementary schools. In spite of considerable improvement in school buildings, including some really fine new schools built in the last ten years, there are some thousands of schools, particularly in the rural areas, which are unfit for anything but pigsties.

Many of these poor schools belong to the religious bodies and continue under their control, together with the teachers in them. Indeed, the Dual System, under which 10,533 schools, more than half the elementary schools of the country, remain under the control of the religious bodies, though the local Education Authority equips them and pays the teachers, is the biggest single obstacle to a democratic educational system. In these schools the Church has in its hands the appointment of the teachers, who are, of course, subject to a religious test on appointment and promotion, and the control of religious instruction, which is denominational and subject to inspection and supervision by the clergy. Thus in many rural areas where the overwhelming majority of the children may be and often is from nonconformist families, the only school is a church school. These schools cannot be closed or rebuilt by the local Education Authority. They are the relics of the first half of the nineteenth century, when the Church, having used all its influence to prevent the introduction of popular education, at last recognised that such a system was inevitable and hastened to maintain control by posing as "pioneers," raising its own funds and securing State subsidies. Successive Education Acts from 1870 onwards have, in spite of the obvious inability of the churches to meet their financial obligations, maintained and even strengthened the vested interests of the churches. The result can be seen to-day in our towns and villages in the dingy pseudo-Gothic edifices with small, dark class-rooms leading from one another, badly lit, heated by a dirty, smoky stove or open fire, without water or proper sanitation—a fitting monument to the self-styled pioneers of education. Out of 753 officially condemned school buildings in the Board of Education's black list—compiled before the war and now completely out of date—541 were church schools. The efforts of the more progressive Education Authorities to provide

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adequate primary education are hamstrung by the grip of a declining Church.

At the Secondary stage—over the age of 11—the class basis of our social system is equally cramping. It has produced a system of which social stratification and the old school tie traditions are the outstanding features. Some 80 per cent. of the nation's children "complete" their education in elementary schools at the age of 14! About 13 per cent., after being subjected at the tender age of 10 or 11 to highly competitive tests, are allowed to proceed to secondary schools, while a few thousand more pass at 13 from the elementary to the junior technical schools. Nearly half of these fortunate half million children pay fees. At the apex of the social pyramid stand "public" schools, admission to which depends solely on wealth and privilege and is limited to some 50,000 pupils, mostly boys. From this total of 550,000 secondary school pupils, roughly 50,000 reach the universities, more than half of them through the "public" schools.

While less than one in every hundred pupils in State-aided schools reach the University in each year, over eight in every hundred do so from the "public" schools. Thus the system of higher education is admirably adapted to maintain the dominance of the ruling class for whom the bulk of the controlling posts in administration, commerce, industry and the sciences are strictly preserved, while absorbing a carefully selected few to supplement the declining powers of a narrow privileged class. No wonder the "public" school system is the admiration of every ruling class in the world and has earned the highest compliment of imitation by Hitler himself. Nevertheless, the system has one fatal weakness, revealed already in the imperialist war of 1914-18, in the period of violent economic competition which followed it and still more glaringly at Dunkirk, Singapore and Libya. The old school tie tradition assumes that a ruling class is concerned only with the science of ruling others. First hand knowledge of the application of science to production was and still is regarded as unnecessary for this chosen few. After all, a gentleman does not dirty his hands! So knowledge of Latin or Greek, a sterile and pedantic acquisition of science and mathematics, or a literary study of modern languages, remain as the supreme tests of ability in this age of aeroplanes and tanks.

Such are the high-lights of our present educational system. It is clear to all but the purblind diehard that it cannot survive the strains and stresses of an anti-Fascist war. The rapid success of Soviet Russia in producing in one generation a host of trained and qualified leaders and technicians has exposed the inadequacy of our educational system. The British people, when it becomes aware of what is at stake, will be in no mood to tolerate any longer the strangle-hold of the vested interests of Church and old school tie. It will demand a unified democratic educational system which will guarantee to every child an equal opportunity, a full and free education irrespective of the economic and social circumstances of its parents. The insistence of this popular demand has been fully recognised by the Prime Minister, who has on more than one occasion spoken of "the forward march of the common people towards their just and true inheritance."

The Government is therefore taking the first steps towards introducing a new Education Bill. But the vested interests of the educational world, in the past able either to destroy or emasculate progressive measures, are to-day actively and skilfully campaigning to exploit the popular demand in their own interests. The measure of their success so far can be estimated from some of the proposed clauses of the Draft Bill now the subject of negotiation:—

(1) Post-primary education from the age of 11 to be secondary until 15 or possibly 16, compulsory and full-time; further education to 18 years, either full or part-time; all schools, including privately-owned schools, to be subject to inspection and to comply with minimum educational and physical standards.

(2) In single school areas (mainly rural areas where the only school is a Church school) the school to be transferred to the local authority; in other areas Church schools to be transferred to the authority if they fail to reach a required standard; a third grouping, which "may contract out," to receive a 50 per cent. grant for structural improvements.

(3) Provision for a national agreed syllabus of religious instruction, which may be based on compulsory religious instruction in all schools; religious instruction to be inspected by H.M. inspectors; religious knowledge to be a qualifying subject for teachers' certificates; with a "conscience

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clause " for teachers who desire to " contract out " of giving religious instruction.

(4) A concession extending admission to the "public" schools to a wider section of children in return for State aid, as foreshadowed on June 16 by the President of the Board in the House of Commons debate on the Education Estimates.

Certain features of these proposals will be welcome. The intention to consider all education over the age of 11 to be secondary, the raising of the school-leaving age to 15 or 16 without exemption and the indication in Mr. Butler's speech that young people to the age of 18 fall within the scope of the education service, would fulfil a widely recognised need. The proposal to transfer church schools to local authorities in single school areas, and possibly others, is a necessary and vital step.

But the above forecast, if correct, has also reactionary and dangerous features, which would perpetuate vested interests and strengthen their hold upon the education system.

An analysis of the proposals shows that in return for certain concessions assumed to have been made by the churches (already, however, repudiated in advance by the newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in an address to the National Society for Christian Education on June 3, 1942), the Government is prepared to concede the whole programme for extending Church influence into the council schools (*i.e.*, schools built, equipped and maintained by the local education authorities out of rates and taxes). At the moment in council schools religious instruction is by law optional (though in practice almost universal) and strictly undenominational and not subject to inspection by Board inspectors. This compromise had temporarily diminished the bitter controversies of earlier years. But the demands of the archbishops, if accepted, as they would appear to be, in the draft now under discussion, would entirely alter the position. The Archbishops' Manifesto, published in February, 1941, aims at forming a national syllabus of religious instruction to be obligatory in all council schools, at training specialist teachers for giving it and empowering H.M. inspectors to inspect it. Conscience clauses for the parents and teachers are promised, but in practice such pledges have proved completely ineffective. If the churches succeed in attaining a position where doctrines agreeable to them are systematically taught, it will be extremely difficult for a teacher who does not outwardly conform to secure appointment, let alone promotion. We are in effect faced with a skilful attempt to use the schools as a channel for propagating the doctrines of particular churches—and this under cover of a supposedly progressive and democratic Bill.

Nor are the "public" schools less audacious. Faced with a storm of popular condemnation and threatened in many cases with bankruptcy, they too hope to save themselves at the public expense. In his speech on the Education Estimates, Mr. Butler, the President of the Board of Education, had a great deal to say of the virtues of boarding schools and suggested that these might well be extended to children whose parents could not afford to pay for the privilege. He announced that a committee was to be set up to consider practical steps "by which the facilities of a boarding-school education might be extended to those who desired them, irrespective of means." What does this mean? It means that a number of free places and scholarships would be awarded to the children of poor parents in the existing "public" schools, which would receive in return a subsidy from the State. These changes, prescribed as educational, conceal a scheme to prop up these decaying aristocratic institutions with "public" money. The "public" schools serve a purely reactionary purpose in our national life. They train the future leaders to carry out the policy of the ruling class. Subsidise these schools, and no matter if a sprinkling of the trainees is drawn from a wider class than the aristocracy or moneyed industrialist, the highly selected few will continue to receive an expensive and reactionary training for the service of Imperialism—but in future at the expense of the State.

Once again the vested interests of Church and old school tie are blocking the way to a unified democratic and progressive educational system. At the moment they are manoeuvring to consolidate their position while giving lip service to the slogan of equal opportunity. For more than a year a powerful clerical campaign has been conducted to secure increased control over the nation's

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schools. A petition in favour of the Archbishops' Manifesto signed by 270 M.P.s and peers has been presented to the Prime Minister.

Local and district conferences aiming at "improvements" of religious instruction have been organised. There has been a widespread press campaign and a new and dangerous feature has been the united front of the Free Churches with the Church of England. If their manoeuvres are exposed and defeated by the progressive forces, the churches will no doubt resort to political blackmail. They will threaten to defeat any Bill which does not satisfy them.

But to-day is not as yesterday. The hold of organised religion on the public is weakening, particularly since its reactionary rôle in Austria, Spain and Vichy France has opened the eyes of millions. More and more progressive people are looking favourably on the secular solution of the religious controversies, *i.e.*, for the teaching in schools of only secular subjects. As for the old school tie, it has become the by-word of the music hall and the B.B.C. On the other hand, on educational issues at least, the progressive forces are better informed, more determined and more united than ever before. The pressure of working class and educational organisations, the organised voice of parents and a vigilant press can shape the future health, knowledge and opportunities of the nation's children.

The policy of the Labour Party, formulated in the London Conference, May, 1942, supported the idea of the multilateral school. This is a conception of one school with different courses of instruction for the secondary stage (over 11) instead of the present senior, technical, and secondary schools. Also it demanded a greatly improved welfare service, with compulsory medical inspection and treatment for all children (including those under 5), a free mid-day meal, compulsory part-time day continuation classes over the age of 16, and reorganisation of the universities. The Co-operative Congress of this year have also pressed for an Education Bill which shall include the multilateral school.

These excellent schemes must not be allowed to remain in Utopia. The working class needs to press and campaign for a Bill which will incorporate them.

Any progressive Education Bill must, in the first place, include in its provisions the abolition of Dual Control, *i.e.*, the taking over of all church schools by the State and local education authorities, as well as the absorption of all private schools, including the Eton and Harrow type of "public" school, into the national education system. Without these two steps any Bill to promote educational "advance" would be a mockery. Fees for secondary education must be abolished. There must be a wide extension of nursery schools and of the children's health and welfare service as an integral part of the education system. All forms of higher education, including the universities, must be freed from upper class control and thrown open to the children of the mass of the people. We must press for the multilateral school, wherever such a school is practicable. Nor, finally, can we overlook the "content" of education, that is, the need to re-fashion the curriculum of schools, so that they may play their part in a world freed from Fascism, race-hatred, and war.

Here arises the need for unity in action of all progressive forces concerned in educational advance. This year's Labour Party Conference adopted an educational policy which, though remarkable for its avoidance of highly important issues, yet provides the basis for such united action of progressive educational forces in the country as will both repel reactionary attacks, and lay the basis for the free people's school of the future.

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Book Review

Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Question

Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Question by I. Rennap. With an Introduction by W. Gallacher, M.P. Lawrence & Wishart, *2s. 6d.*

THERE HAVE been many good books on one or other single aspect of the Jewish question. It is the feat of our comrade, Rennap—one possible only to a Marxist scholar—that he has here presented it in all its aspects. He lifts it away from the class of things "peculiar," "mysterious and special," which can only be described but not explained, and relates it to the broad stream of humanity's past and future and the general problems of the working-class movement.

When we add that he has written, lucidly and clearly, on the history of the Jewish problem, the experience of Socialism in its solution, the position of Zionism and the Palestine community, with a brief sketch of the strength of organised anti-Semitism in Britain and the U.S.A. to-day—and has done all this in 116 pages, a compass that should not be too long for anyone, however busy and active, to master—then we can realise the great skill of his achievement and the great value of it to all of us to-day.

An understanding of anti-Semitism and the role of the Jew is an absolutely indispensable weapon against Fascism and its insidious fifth column tactics. As Rennap writes:—

> "For the non-Jew the menace of anti-Semitism as a diversionist tool in the present situation cannot be over-emphasised. He must help to stamp out every manifestation of anti-Semitism as part and parcel of his struggle for democracy and against Hitler and his agents in this country. He must look upon anti-Semitism as the Trojan horse which has proved so successful in the past and which the reactionary pro-Fascists will have no hesitation in resorting to when the first opportunity arises."

It is no accident that, among the names of those who have been most prominent in anti-Semitic agitation in this country, in U.S.A. and in other countries, stand all those who have been foremost in old friendship with Hitler, foremost in treachery, foremost in anti-Soviet hatred and misrepresentation, and many whose names at once recur as foremost opponents to the Second Front

As Rennap writes also :—

> "The immediate task of the Jewish people to-day is simple and clear. They must subordinate everything to the military defeat of Hitler, and, in other non-Jewish organisations, *they must unite as Jews*. Jewry, if it wishes to win the respect of its non-Jewish brothers, must be in the forefront of the anti-Hitler struggle. For this is the path of progress and if there is one great outstanding lesson we as Jewish people must learn, a lesson that all our long history teaches, it is that where there is progress and expansion, where education and culture advances, anti-Semitism dare not show its evil face. Where reaction flourishes, education and culture are destroyed, while anti-Semitism becomes the principal weapon of those whose one desire is to hold back progress."

Jews and non-Jews alike need not only to know this, but to know why and to be able to explain to others. The reasoned basis is here in this book. Each question is approached historically, so that we can watch its development, study its causes, precedents and relation—the only way to get at the real facts of the present-day position.

There is also an inspiring and forceful introduction by W. Gallacher, M.P., to whose long and active interest in their problems many Jews, both Communist and non-Communist alike, can testify from personal experience.

IVOR MONTAGU.

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The Quest for Security in New Zealand by H. B. Sutch (*9d*, 160 pp.).
Anthology of Religious Verse by N. Nicholson (Pelican Books, *9d*, 106 pp.).
Modern Battle by Major Paul W. Thompson (192 pp.). Des Vers de France (140 pp.).
Words and Deeds by H. W. Nevinson (Pelican Books, *9d*, 160 pp.).

Penguin Specials.—The French Canadians To-day by Wilfred Bovey (160 pp.).
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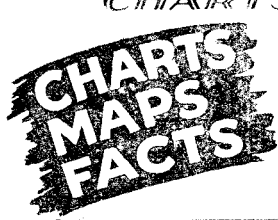

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